

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
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AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2187

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FT, FR, OAU
SUBJ: OAU ASST SEC GEN ON TFAI

REF: A. ACCRA 2842, B. ACCRA 2524, C. PARIS 10165

SUMMARY: DURING HOUR-LONG CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE APR 12,
PETER ONU, OAU ASST SEC GEN FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS,
DISCUSSED RECENT ACCRA CONFERENCE ON TFAI, FUTURE
ROLE OF OAU RE TFAI AND HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF WHAT FUTURE
HOLDS. ACCRA CONFERENCE WAS ALMOST FAILURE, BUT AT LAST
MINUTE OAU THREATENED TO TAKE PUBLIC POSITION WHICH BROUGHT
ETHIOPIAN-SUPPORTED AFAR GROUPS TO AGREE TO UNITY STATEMENT
THAT EVENTUALLY EMERGED FROM CONFERENCE. OAU HAD FORWARDED
TWO REQUESTS TO FRENCH, ONE CONCERNING DATE OF ELECTIONS
AND THE OTHER CONCERNING MAKEUP OF ELCTORAL CONSTITUENCY.
EARLIER FEARS OF SOMALIA CAUSING TROUBLE HAD ABATED, BUT
HARD-LINE ETHIOPIAN POSITION COULD STILL LEAD TO PROBLEMS.
NONETHELESS HE WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC. END SUMMARY.
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1. ONU SAID ACCRA CONFERENCE HAD BEEN DIFFICULT. NOTHING
HAD BEEN AGREED UPON AS FINAL DAY APPROACHED. OAU GROUP
THEN THREATENED BRING MEETINT TO A CLOSE AND FOLLOW UP WITH
PUBLIC STATEMENT. THE THREE AFAR GROUPS WHICH HAD BEEN
TAKING HARD LINE THEN AGREED ACCEPT "UNITY" OF TFAI
POLITICAL GROUPS, ALTHOUGH ONU AGREED HE NOT SURE HOW

MUCH VALUE AGREEMENT WILL TURN OUT TO HAVE. HE SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED THAT AFTER AGREEMENT WAS REACHED, ALL OF THE TFAI GROUPS GOT TOGETHER SOCIALLY FOR FIRST TIME SINCE CONFERENCE BEGAN AND SHOWED REAL CAMARADERIE AMONG THEMSELVES.

2. MAJOR PROBLEM AT ACCRA WAS OVER TWO ISSUES OF CONSTITUTIONAL NATURE WHICH WERE TECHNICALLY OUTSIDE OF OAU COMPETENCE. FIRST WAS WHETHER REFERENDUM AND ELECTION FOR PROVISIONAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD BE HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY. SECOND WAS MAKEUP OF ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCY. OAU EVENTUALLY SUBMITTED TWO QUESTIONS TO FRANCE AFTER CONFERENCE OVER ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANTS. RE FIRST PROBLEM, PROPOSAL WAS THAT FRANCE AGREE TO HOLDING ELECTION LATER THAN REFERENDUM (ONU THOUGH FRANCE MIGHT AGREE). RE SECOND WHICH INVOLVED AFARS DISAGREEMENT WITH CONCEPT OF SINGLE ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCY, WINNER TAKE ALL, VERSUS SEVERAL ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES AS SOUGHT BY AFARS, ONU THROUGH FRENCH PROBABLY WOULD NOT CHANGE PARIS AGREEMENT ON COMPOSITION OF ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCY. ASKED IF THIS WOULD CAUSE TROUBLE WITH AFARS, ONU SAID IT MIGHT, BUT HE EXPECTED AN "AFRICAN" SOLUTION, I.E., SINGLE CONSTITUENCY WOULD DESIGNATE "X" SEATS FOR ISSAS, "Y" SEATS FOR AFARS, ETC. THUS EVEN IF LPAI AND ITS ALLIES WON, THERE WOULD STILL BE CERTAIN NUMBER OF AFAR SEATS. GRANTED THESE WOULD NOT BE FILLED BY AFAR OPPOSITION GROUPS, ALTHOUGH EVEN AMONG THOSE GROUPS, SOME AFARS MIGHT DECIDE THAT SEATS WERE WORTH HAVING AND LINE UP WITH LPAI.

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3. ONU SAID NEITHER ETHIOPIAN (WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS RELATIVELY HIGH-POWERED) NOR SOMALI (LOW-POWERED -- REPRESENTED BY AMBASSADOR TO SENEGAL) GROUPS WERE PERMITTED TO JOIN DISCUSSIONS. THE THREE AFAR GROUPS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY CONSULTED WITH ETHIOPIANS WHENEVER THEY COULD AND OFTEN RETURNED TO A SESSION WITH HARDER LINE THEN THEY HAD BEFORE. MOST RADICAL OF THREE WAS MLD, BUT ONU HEARD THAT LEADERSHIP WAS LIKELY CHANGE SOON IN FAVOR OF A MODERATE.

4. IN GENERAL, ONU WAS MILDLY OPTIMISTIC. HE THOUGHT DANGER THAT SOMALIA MIGHT TAKE SOME KIND OF ACTION VIS-A-VIS DJIBOUTI HAD SUBSIDED. IF PROBLEMS CAME, THEY WERE LIKELY TO COME FROM ETHIOPIA AND ETHIOPIAN-SUPPORTED AFAR GROUPS. HE SAID HE DID NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY ETHIOPIA TOOK HARD LINE IT DID SINCE DJIBOUTIANS MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THEY A) WANTED INDEPENDENCE AND B) DEPENDED UPON THE PORT AND ETHIOPIAN TRAFFIC TO SURVIVE. HE THOUGHT ETHIOPIAN'S MAIN CONCERN WAS THAT

DJIBOUTI WOULD BECOME ARAB STATE FOLLOWED BY CONCERN OVER SOMALI IRREDENTISM. ALL AFRICAN PARTIES AGREED THAT FRENCH MILITARY BASE WAS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT ONU MADE CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN "BASE" AND "PRESENCE", NOTING THAT OTHER FORMER FRENCH COLONIES HAD SUCCEEDED IN MAINTAINING UNIMPAIRED OVERSIGHT WHILE PERMITTING FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AND THAT THIS WAS A SOVEREIGN DECISION THAT, IF MADE, HE THOUGHT WOULD NOT TROUBLE OAU.

5. ONU THOUGHT THAT OAU NOW HAD NO FURTHER ROLE TO PLAY AS TFAI MOVES TOWARD INDEPENDENCE EXCEPT TO OBSERVE REFERENDUM. CHARGE TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO TELL HIM THAT WE WOULD BE OPENING CONGEN BEFORE END OF THIS MONTH TO BE RAISED TO EMBASSY STATUS ON ACHIEVEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE. ONU SEEMS PLEASED.
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